

Candidate Interest #1

Semiotic Approaches and Techniques for Describing Cinematography

Semiotics is an area of study devoted to interpreting signs and the meanings associated with those signs. A sign can be anything that possess meaning or needs interpretation. Within the field of cognitive science the meaning humans associate with signs and the representations for those signs, both physical and mental, is a phenomena that has been research for decades.

Through the work done by semioticians like De Saussure, Christian Metz, Roland Barthes, and Susanne Langer, many approaches to studying signs and their individual meanings have been developed. The approaches developed by those previously mentioned, can provided insight into why the same sign can both invoke the exact same, similar, or even completely different meaning and representation within two different people.

Cinematography is a form of art that humans of all ages have enjoyed and interpreted for decades. The art of creating film relies on the concepts studied in semiotics and cognitive science, as these concepts are used to invoke a certain feeling or resonate a particular message within the films viewer. Anything from the music used to a single character actions, are presented in a specific way by the film's producer to alter the views way of thinking and feeling.

This project will attempt to show how certain semiotic techniques and approaches used by film makers change the way the viewer perceives and processes what they see and hear. In doing so, elements of film, both audio and visual, can be shown to affect high-level cognitive processes within humans. Cognitive processes like attention, interpretation, mental representation and many other processes are altered, explaining how humans can have a subjective experience that is both very similar and very different to one another.